

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

May 18, 2005
7:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Lynde, Vice-Chair Bonincontri, Commissioners Bach, Mathews, Orrico

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Robertson

STAFF PRESENT: Kathleen Burgess, Emil King, Department of Planning and Community Development, Kevin McDonald, Transportation Department

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m. by Chair Lynde who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Robertson who was excused.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved by consensus.

4. STAFF REPORTS

Comprehensive Planning Manager Kathleen Burgess informed the Commissioners that the City Council followed the Commission's recommendations for docketing the Comprehensive Plan amendments with the exception of Tingle.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT – None

6. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCILS, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None

7. STUDY SESSION

A. Factoria Area Transportation Study (FATS) Update

Kevin McDonald, Senior Planner, said the first Factoria Area Transportation Study was completed in 1994 after the area was annexed into the city. Most of the projects that were identified in the first study were related to roadway capacity and have been completed. In 2002 the owners of Factoria Mall indicated a desire to expand. The Council approved an additional

51,000 square feet of retail and 685 units of housing; the request for yet another 100,000 square feet of retail space was deferred pending the outcome of the FATS update. Also in 2002 the Department of Transportation conducted a transportation study of the Eastgate/I-90 area, the geography of which overlapped with Factoria; some of the projects from that study were referred to the FATS update and have been included in the recommendation.

In January 2004 the Council provided direction regarding the FATS update. They wanted to see the update conducted with extensive public participation, but without a citizen advisory committee. The public was engaged through surveys, community meetings and intensive workshops. The Council directed that the study should include the land use and transportation system through the year 2030 with the current zoning configuration, and to include the hypothetical expansion of Factoria Mall by 100,000 square feet. The Council was most concerned about overall mobility within the Factoria area and therefore directed the inclusion of non-motorized facilities and transit in analyzing the transportation system. The Council also wanted the study to include an urban design component.

The study is on track for adoption by the Council on June 20.

Mr. McDonald said some 2,600 questionnaires were mailed out to residents and businesses in the Factoria area early on in the update process in order to frame the community discussions. There were three community meetings held, two in the mall and one in City Hall; each meeting was quite well attended. There were also a number of meetings held for the business community which has a very high stake in what happens with regard to the transit system and urban design. Two walking audits of the area were facilitated by the group *Feet First* to get a pedestrian-level view of what works and what does not work about the non-motorized environment in Factoria. The report generated from the walking audit will be included in the FATS update final report. Much of what was heard about the pedestrian system had to do with getting around and through private property. As the study progressed, the Planning Commission, Transportation Commission, and City Council were kept updated. The latest information was also available on the fatsupdate.com website.

The main component of any transportation analysis is the roadways. The adopted level of service for the Factoria area is E+. The study found that while the intersection levels of service will for the most part continue to function within the established limits through 2030, there are and will continue to be large backups behind certain signals, which blocks driveway access. Neither the drivers nor the shop owners like that, so ways to reduce the queuing at the major intersections were studied.

In the end, the traffic analysis concluded that even with all of the influences on the transportation system in Factoria, the hypothetical addition of 100,000 square feet of retail to Factoria Mall will not deteriorate any intersection level of service below the adopted standard.

The study included a look at the long-term mobility for all modes of transportation in the Factoria area. The conclusion reached was that while the adopted levels of service can be met, there are investments the city and private sector should make. Focusing on the pedestrian/bicycle system, Mr. McDonald said the study highlighted a number of disconnects. Projects to fill in those gaps will be included in the final report. There are also places where people want to go but there is as yet no plan or infrastructure in place; the report will outline a plan for new connections, primarily serving the community on the east side of Factoria in the vicinity of Monthaven, Somerset and Sunset neighborhoods. Other non-motorized enhancements called out in the plan include some midblock crossings, some crosswalk improvements, and pedestrian countdown signals. Wayfinding is very important and needed to

let pedestrians know where they are and how to get to where they want to be. From a pedestrian's viewpoint, many of the parking lot designs and the routes between buildings leave a lot to be desired.

Mr. McDonald said there is a conflict between pedestrians and vehicles at the intersection of SE 41st Place and 124th Avenue SE. The plan calls for extending the existing median to allow pedestrians crossing the lane to have a secure place of refuge. Also on 124th Avenue SE, the plan calls for extending the bike lanes north behind the SRO complex to connect with the I-90 Mountains to Sound Greenway trail.

There was strong interest expressed by residents, shoppers and business owners with regard to additional transit facilities and services. There are over 5,000 employees in the office complex in the northeast quadrant of the Factoria area, and many of them rely on transit. The study contemplated and recommends new bus layover spaces on 124th Avenue SE to the west of the high school ballfield, a new transit station on Factoria Boulevard near SE 38th Street, and transit flyer stops in the medians of I-90 and I-405 that will capture regional transit services.

The study recommends a few roadway projects, including a connectivity project running parallel and to the east of Factoria Boulevard that would extend the existing 129th Avenue SE from Newport Way to SE 36th Street. Improved crosswalks are also recommended in the connectivity category.

With regard to capacity, Mr. McDonald said the intersection of Coal Creek Parkway and I-405 is one of the places where the level of service falls below the adopted standard. The problem is occurring with the southbound off ramp to eastbound Coal Creek Parkway. The proposal is to add capacity by adding a receiving lane on Coal Creek Parkway so that traffic coming off of I-405 has a place to go while waiting for the signal to cycle and allow them to move through; currently southbound I-405 traffic exiting the freeway onto Coal Creek Parkway backs up onto the freeway.

A similar situation exists at Factoria Boulevard and I-90. The problem there is that the northbound traffic on Factoria Boulevard wanting to go westbound on I-90 backs up to the south. The proposal is to add capacity in the form of another storage lane under the freeway and creating a double left onto the freeway onramp. To accomplish that, however, it will be necessary to push Factoria Boulevard to the east and construct another lane of traffic on the east side of the bridge supports, which can be done without reengineering the bridge.

Mr. McDonald said the intersection of SE 38th Street and Factoria Boulevard presents a problem for pedestrians and vehicles alike. The intersection level of service is very good owing to the fact that the signal timing is very long. However, when the signal is green for Factoria Boulevard, cars back up along SE 38th Street and block driveways. The study includes proposals for making the intersection function better and the consolidation of some access points to Factoria Mall, which the mall management supports.

The urban design component of the FATS update was aimed at knitting together the transportation system with the various land uses into a livable whole. The study developed some design guidelines focused on a well-integrated layout of the various uses supportive of transit services and oriented to pedestrians. The design template includes pedestrians in the overall matrix of system users and gives them at least the same priority as vehicles for getting around and through Factoria. The recommendation calls for mixed uses integrated both geographically and vertically.

The study also identifies some gateways, key intersections, and focal points that can serve as future reference points and gathering places to create a soul for the Factoria area. The area in and around SE 38th Street and Factoria Boulevard is identified as ground zero for what is happening in the area. The vision calls for a transit center with bays on each side of Factoria Boulevard connected by a grade-separated pedestrian overpass. More importantly, the overpass could be utilized by the 5000 employees in the northeast quadrant who want to lunch at the mall; currently the pedestrian environment between those quadrants is decidedly unfriendly and can take a great deal of time to negotiate. There are ample opportunities for public/private partnerships, and King County Metro will need to have an active role.

The proposal calls for the planting of trees in the median of Factoria Boulevard in the vicinity of SE 40th Lane. As the area redevelops, the buildings should be brought closer to the street, and plazas should be established at some of the community focal points to create more of an identity for the area. The plan calls for trees in a median in SE 41st Place running in front of residential uses on the south margin of the mall site.

Mr. McDonald said implementation of the study recommendations will require adoption of design guidelines into the Land Use Code. The guidelines remain conceptual only; the specifics will be left to the process of updating the Factoria Subarea Plan with policy changes and a Land Use Plan map change to re-designate the General Commercial parcels along Factoria Boulevard to Community Business as recommended by the FATS update. Community Business allows for a greater range of uses and the application of urban design guidelines.

Ms. Burgess explained that the Factoria Mall site is zoned F-1, which was determined while the site was still under the jurisdiction of King County. The F-1 district, however, is very closely related to Community Business.

Mr. McDonald said implementation of the FATS update will require revising the East Bellevue Transportation Study to update the project list. No policy changes are necessary. The East Bellevue Transportation Study will be the repository for all of the FATS projects.

Ms. Burgess said the Council on May 9 initiated the Comprehensive Plan amendments to the Factoria Subarea Plan and the East Bellevue Transportation Study. Those will be coming before the Commission as part of the 2005 amendment package.

Mr. McDonald said a major update of the Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan is scheduled to occur in 2006. Some of the policies and projects from the FATS update will be incorporated into that body of work.

In initiating the FATS update, the Council directed that some of the money be held aside for early implementation projects. The list of projects includes landmark trailhead amenities at the I-90 trail, including benches, a kiosk and signage; rezoning the General Commercial properties on the west side of Factoria Boulevard to Community Business; intersection improvements, including the installation of countdown signals at SE 38th Street and SE 40th Place; a midblock crossing at SE 38th Street; elimination of the on-street parking on the north side of SE 38th Street; the planting of trees in the median of Factoria Boulevard; the pedestrian refuge island on 124th Avenue SE; the creation of transit layover spaces on 124th Avenue SE; and enhancements to the bus stops on Factoria Boulevard.

Mr. McDonald said the comments of the Planning Commission will be carried forward to the Transportation Commission on May 26, and the study recommendations will be before the Council on June 6 in study session, and on June 20 for action on consent.

Commissioner Mathews voiced support for the proposals regarding pedestrian movements in the Factoria area.

Chair Lynde commented that while the overall plan to facilitate the movement of pedestrians between the northeast quadrant and Factoria Mall is well thought out, it depends on a variety of factors coming together. She asked if pedestrians could be accommodated at grade using the existing right-of-way. Mr. McDonald said a number of what-if scenarios were run with by the traffic operations staff. It was found that if the at-grade pedestrian crossing at SE 38th Street is revised to include a pedestrian scramble or adjusted signal timing, the intersection will fail the level of service standard. A pedestrian bridge could be constructed independent of any redevelopment of the uses on either side of the intersection, but experience has shown that stand-alone pedestrian bridges lacking significant origins and destinations at either end tend not to be used much.

Commissioner Orrico asked if the study included a look at the intersection at Newport Way. Mr. McDonald said there is a project already in the pipeline for that intersection. The proposal is for a dual left-turn lane from southbound Factoria Boulevard to eastbound Newport Way to reduce the queue. The project was considered as part of the FATS update but was already in the pipeline.

B. Lake Hills Gateway and Identity Treatments

Senior Planner Emil King said the gateway and identity treatments represent the implementation of one part of the West Lake Hills Neighborhood Investment Strategy. The focus is on using public investment to enhance the look and feel of the Lake Hills area. The Council allocated more than \$200,000 for a pilot project in the area that could be replicated in other areas of the city in the future.

The West Lake Hills Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) provided direction to improve the appearance of the streets and rights-of-way, and to do so using a visual theme and in a manner that identifies the entrances to the Lake Hills neighborhood. Some neighborhoods in the city utilize signs to mark their entrances. Often pavement treatments are used as identity features, either on sidewalks or in crosswalks. The Lake Hills residents expressed an interest in pedestrian-scaled lighting, but the cost of large-scale implementation of such an amenity is beyond the available budget of this project.

The guiding principles directing the gateway and identity treatments for Lake Hills limit locating the features to public properties. The treatments are to be geared for a range of users, including motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians, and they are to reflect a theme based on the unique characteristics of Lake Hills. Features are to be permanent in nature, and they are to be constructed in a manner so that they are able to be properly maintained over time.

Mr. King said following the West Lake Hills CAC process two additional community meetings were held at which the discussion was focused on the proposed locations for gateway and identity treatments and what form they should take. For the most part people expressed support for lighting, seating areas, landscaping, subtle signage, and public art. A community open house is scheduled for May 24 to share the current designs for the gateway and identity treatments.

Mr. King said a community photo contest was held last year that aimed at gathering information on defining the essence of Lake Hills. Thirty-eight photos were submitted, and a sampling of them were shown to the Commissioners. The photos focused on the rustic features and

agricultural uses that exist within the Lake Hills area; there were also a few photos of houses and churches, and several lake shots.

Over twenty locations for gateway and identity treatments were suggested during the public process. Six of those were ultimately identified as the most promising: 148th Avenue SE near SE 20th Street; 148th Avenue NE north of Main Street; the intersection of SE 16th Street and 156th Avenue SE; the greenbelt trail crossing on Lake Hills Boulevard; the intersection of Lake Hills Boulevard at 145th Place SE; and the intersection of Lake Hills Boulevard and 148th Avenue SE. Mr. King shared with the Commissioners the design ideas for each location, noting that consideration has been given to keeping any signs to a moderate size and incorporating a ranch-style home roof pattern into the design and either a real or a faux brick treatment. Landscaping improvements and seating would be included as appropriate. The community had expressed an interest in interactive artwork. More work will be done to identify appropriate pieces and which locations would be most suitable.

The site at the intersection of SE 16th and 156th Avenue SE has been given the highest priority by the neighborhood. They want to see the produce stand enhanced, added seating, landscaping improvements, and art. The site sees a lower level of activity during the winter months and the neighborhood would like to create more of a twelve-month activity center. Mr. King shared with the Commission a schematic drawing of what the site could look like. He said a \$15,000 grant has been received from Starbucks to be used in conjunction with city monies to enhance the site.

Commissioner Bach asked if thought has been given to putting signage on the overpass on 148th Avenue SE. Mr. King said the location was considered. He pointed out, however, that there are two types of gateways: large gateways that serve to announce entrance to a city, and smaller gateways that announce entrance to a particular neighborhood. It was concluded that any identity treatment located on the overpass would conflict with the banners that are frequently hung there, and that the location and its prominence is more appropriate to a city gateway treatment.

Mr. King informed the Commission that Lake Hills was developed in 1955 as a large planned community.

8. NEW BUSINESS

A. Washington State APA Conference

Mr. King said the 2005 annual state American Planning Association conference will be held at Meydenbauer Center October 31 through November 2. The conference was last held in Bellevue about ten years ago. The host city traditionally takes a leadership role and can use the conference as an opportunity to highlight its achievements through sessions and mobile workshops. There will be a Downtown Bellevue walking tour offered, and there will be a bike tour of Mercer Slough and Downtown Mercer Island. There will also be mobile workshops focused on innovative housing and affordable housing, and on Phase I light rail construction occurring in Seattle.

Mr. King said the short course on local planning will be offered on Monday morning, October 31. An appointed and elected officials lunch has been scheduled for the same day at noon at Meydenbauer Center. Ms. Burgess said the city will pick up the tab for any Commissioner wanting to attend the lunch.

Ms. Burgess briefly reviewed the Commission calendar.

9. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. February 9, 2005

Motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Bonincontri. Second was by Commissioner Orrico and the motion carried unanimously.

B. February 16, 2005

Motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Bonincontri. Second was by Commissioner Mathews and the motion carried without dissent; Chair Lynde and Commissioner Bach abstained from voting.

C. March 16, 2005

Motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Bonincontri. Second was by Commissioner Mathews and the motion carried unanimously.

D. March 23, 2005

Motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Bonincontri. Second was by Commissioner Orrico and the motion carried without dissent; Chair Lynde abstained from voting.

10. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. Burgess noted that the election of Chair and Vice-Chair will be slated for June 8.

Ms. Burgess said interviews have been held with some of the applicants for the vacant Commission seat. Hopefully an appointment will be made soon.

11. PUBLIC COMMENT – None

12. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Lynde adjourned the meeting at 8:43 p.m.

Staff to the Planning Commission

Date

Chair to the Planning Commission

Date